

## JOINT CLOSE AIR SUPPORT (JCAS)



### **Joint Test and Evaluation Program**

|                           |        |
|---------------------------|--------|
| Authorized Manning:       | 24     |
| Total JT&E Budget (TY\$): | \$22M  |
| Charter Date:             | 4QFY97 |
| Completion Date:          | 1QFY03 |

### **Lead Service**

Air Force

### **JT&E DESCRIPTION & CONTRIBUTION TO JOINT VISION 2010**

The Joint Close Air Support (JCAS) is a DoD Joint Test and Evaluation (JT&E) program chartered by OSD to assess the current capabilities of U.S. forces to conduct joint close air support in day, night, and adverse weather conditions, and suggests potential improvements that could be made. To do this, the Joint Test Force will employ multi-Service air and ground equipment and personnel in realistic combat training scenarios. The test will address two critical issues:

1. What is the current combat effectiveness (baseline) of Joint Close Air Support?
  - DAY
  - NIGHT
  - STANDOFF WEAPONS

2. What changes to Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures; systems capabilities; and training increase current effectiveness?

The principal JCAS test site is the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin, CA. JCAS will take advantage of regularly scheduled brigade-level training sessions conducted by rotating Army operational brigades against a permanent opposing force stationed at Ft. Irwin.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The last DoD Joint Test of close air support tactics, techniques, and procedures was completed more than a decade ago. Since then, new weapons and support systems technologies such as the Global Positioning System, low-observability, secure communications, advanced electronic warfare devices, and night-vision devices have been adopted by both ground and air forces. As the interactions among ground and air support forces have evolved, the corresponding tactics, techniques, and procedures for effective close air support have developed in an *ad hoc* manner. JCAS is intended to benchmark where we are in operational effectiveness today and offer improvements likely to emerge from the test.

## **TEST & EVALUATION ACTIVITY**

JCAS was chartered two years ago following a feasibility study. Since then, a skeleton Joint Test Force was initially assembled in the first year and a program test plan was approved. All memoranda of agreement with necessary support units were coordinated and operations facilities were arranged. At the suggestion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the charter for this test was expanded *from Joint Night CAS to Joint CAS*; it will now address both day and night close air support operations. Initial test operations commenced with a mini-test conducted in November 1998 to determine the contribution of visual control of close air support aircraft in daylight medium altitude operations. Field testing began in earnest in March 1999.

## **TEST & EVALUATION ASSESSMENT**

JCAS is a needed test at the right time. As weapon systems become more capable but fewer, and potential enemy forces become steadily more capable, U.S. forces must capitalize on the strengths of leading-edge technology. While many weapon systems embody impressive technical functions, the actual employment of them on the battlefield as part of a greater strategic picture will determine the outcome of future combat. By leveraging off the large-scale and realistic brigade-level combat training at the National Training Center, JCAS will profit from great realism at marginal cost.